

COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY BOARD

SPECIAL MEETING

March 26, 2020

MINUTES

Present:

Arlene Schwartz
Antonio V. Arserio
Joanne Simone
Anthony Caggiano, Vice Chair
Tommy Ruzzano, Chair

Also Present:

Cale Curtis, Interim Executive Director
David Tolces, Weiss Serota Helfman Cole & Bierman, P.L.
James Nardi, Advanced Asset Management

The special meeting of the Margate Community Redevelopment Agency having been properly noticed was called to order at 4:08 p.m., on Thursday March 26, 2020. Chair Tommy Ruzzano said a short prayer for everyone, especially for the first responders and for a doctor at the NorthWest Medical Center that died from the coronavirus and who had practiced medicine for 38 years. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited followed by a roll call.

There was a virtual public meeting held via Zoom. Present in the meeting Chambers were: Chair Tommy Ruzzano, Cale Curtis, Interim Executive Director, Board Attorney David Tolces, James Nardi, Advanced Asset Management, Rita Rodi, CRA Coordinator, and Joseph Kavanagh, City Clerk.

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- 1A. **RESOLUTION 633:** AMENDING RESOLUTION 604 AND DESIGNATING CALE CURTIS, OR HIS DESIGNEE, AS THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE MARGATE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

After David Tolces, Board Attorney, read the resolution title, Ms. Schwartz made the following motion seconded by Mr. Caggiano:

MOTION: SO MOVE TO APPROVE

Ms. Simone asked the Board to reconsider and extend the contract for Jeff Oris. She questioned the Board's decision, commenting that Mr. Oris was more qualified than Mr. Curtis for the Executive Director position and that Mr. Oris had been effective during his time in the position. She questioned a comment made by Mr. Arserio at the March 11, 2020 meeting about how letting Mr. Oris' contract expire impeded the hiring process. She commented on Mr. Oris' strengths, experience and initiatives. She said she was not in favor of the City Manager running the MCRA as he had enough responsibility running the City on a daily basis which was being further impacted by the coronavirus. She made the following amendment which died for the lack of a second:

AMENDMENT: TO RECONSIDER JEFF ORIS FOR TEMPORARY MCRA DIRECTOR

Ms. Schwartz said she had originally agreed with Ms. Simone. She commented that the new Development Services Director, Elizabeth Taschereau, had worked for the Coral Springs CRA and had extensive CRA knowledge. She agreed that the time was not right to give Mr. Curtis additional responsibility. She suggested moving the responsibility to someone already on staff, specifically, the new Development Services Director.

Mr. Caggiano asked Ms. Simone how long the contract would be extended and Ms. Simone said it would be until the applications were reviewed and a new director was chosen.

Mr. Arserio commented that Mr. Oris had previously indicated that he did not want the position or to have the contract extended beyond six months as the intent was for him to hire someone else.

Ms. Simone said she could not vote for the new Development Services Director as she had not seen her application and had no knowledge of her experience. It was her understanding that Ms. Taschereau was an administrator for the CRA in Coral Springs.

David Tolces, Board Attorney, stated that the contract with Mr. Oris had expired and a new agreement would be needed if the Board decided to continue with Mr. Oris.

Cale Curtis, Interim Executive Director, said that Ms. Taschereau had relevant CRA experience as she had worked as administrator for the Coral Springs CRA. He said she just started and he had not spoken with her about the MCRA. He said the resolution named him as Interim Executive Director but it also allowed him to name someone as his designee. He said he was comfortable with the way it was and that he planned to speak Ms. Taschereau about it. He said he would have her meet with each of them individually before he named her as a designee.

There were no comments from the public.

ROLL CALL: Ms. Simone, No; Mr. Arserio, Yes; Ms. Schwartz, Yes; Mr. Caggiano, Yes; Mr. Ruzzano, Yes. The motion passed 4-1.

1B. RESOLUTION 634: AUTHORIZING A SIXTH AMENDMENT TO THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE MARGATE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY AND ADVANCED ASSET MANAGEMENT, INC.

After David Tolces, Board Attorney, read the resolution title, Mr. Caggiano made the following motion, seconded by Ms. Schwartz for discussion:

MOTION: SO MOVE TO APPROVE

Ms. Schwartz asked about including verbiage to have Jim Nardi handle the renovations at Chevy Chase Plaza, similar to what had been done for the Ace Plaza. Attorney Tolces clarified that the Ace Plaza renovations were included in the third amendment to Mr. Nardi's contract, and the amendment before them was for a one-year extension of his contract. Additional items would need to be discussed with Mr. Nardi.

James Nardi, Advanced Asset Management, explained that amendment five of his agreement provided for him to oversee the renovations to Chevy Chase Plaza.

Ms. Simone commented that Mr. Nardi did a good job. She asked the last time a Request For Proposal (RFP) had been done for property management services. She suggested going out for a RFP and extending Mr. Nardi's contract for a few months to compare the fiscal impact and expenditures. She said the same protocol should be used for hiring all contracted jobs. She referenced the meeting back-up and that continuity was given as one of the reasons for extending the Mr. Nardi's contract. She questioned where the continuity was with regards to Mr. Oris' contract.

Mr. Nardi said a RFP for property management services was last done about two years ago [in 2017].

Mr. Arserio said it would be irresponsible to do a RFP at this time and that Mr. Nardi's contract should be extended.

Chair Ruzzano commented that Mr. Nardi had worked on the Ace Plaza project and it came out very well. He said Mr. Nardi was responsive and knowledgeable and his history with the plaza went a long way.

There were no comments from the public.

ROLL CALL: Ms. Simone, No; Mr. Arserio, Yes; Ms. Schwartz, Yes; Mr. Caggiano, Yes; Mr. Ruzzano, Yes. The motion passed 4-1.

2B. DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION: CONSIDERATION OF POTENTIAL RENT ADJUSTMENTS FOR COMMERCIAL TENANTS

Chair Ruzzano said he spoke with Cale Curtis, Interim Executive Director, about adding this item to the agenda to discuss providing possible rent adjustments for tenants of the CRA-owned plazas. He asked the Board Attorney if a specific reason was needed to provide compensation.

David Tolces, Board Attorney, said adjustments to the rent in the form of waivers or abatements could be considered.

Chair Ruzzano said he wanted to be sure the businesses would still be here after this difficult time, and he wanted to be able to be there for them. He said he hoped other property owners would follow suit. He asked everyone for their suggestions.

Mr. Caggiano commented that the role of a CRA was to alleviate slum and blight and turn blighted areas into assets. He said today's discussion was about taking pre-emptive action to prevent slum and blight from happening. He spoke about the value of small businesses. He said he hoped other property managers and plaza owners in the City would follow the MCRA's example. He spoke about the fact that the businesses were forced to close because they were considered non-essential. He noted that it was easier and cheaper to retain tenants than it was to attract new ones. He said whatever the CRA did would be a hand-up, not a hand-out. He implored the Board members to help keep the CRA tenants afloat by forgiving their rent for the month of April.

Mr. Arserio agreed with Mr. Caggiano's comments. He said the MCRA could not afford to have some of its tenants go out of business, especially the anchor stores. He suggested abating rent for the months of April and May because things continued to change with the coronavirus and one month might not be enough. Mr. Arserio made the following motion, seconded by Mr. Caggiano:

MOTION: TO WAIVE RENT FOR THE MONTHS OF APRIL AND MAY FOR TENANTS NOT ALREADY RECEIVING ABATEMENTS THOSE MONTHS

Mr. Arserio said he understood that some of the new tenants already had rent abatements per their leases for build-out, and he wanted to make sure they would not receive the additional abatements.

Ms. Schwartz asked if there were other tenants who had free rent scheduled in the upcoming year. Mr. Nardi responded that there were two tenants, 5801 Margate Boulevard and 1027 North State Road 7, that had planned rent abatements for lessee improvements. He explained the specific terms of both improvements.

Mr. Arserio commented that the two months' abatement would give the MCRA adequate time to evaluate some of the more complex abatements already in the leases.

Attorney Tolces clarified that if rent abatement was currently in the lease, it would not be changed. All tenants would receive rent abatement for April and May and any amounts currently due and owing would be deducted from that amount first.

Eduardo Acevedo, 5869 Margate Boulevard [Flynn's Gaming] expressed gratitude for the motion.

ROLL CALL: Ms. Simone, Yes; Mr. Arserio, Yes; Ms. Schwartz, Yes; Mr. Caggiano, Yes; Mr. Ruzzano, Yes. The motion passed 5-0.

3. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Arserio: Expressed a concern that the School Board had created 47 food distribution centers in the 31 cities in Broward County, and none was in Margate. He said Coral Springs' per capita was one and one-half times that of Margate yet Coral Springs had six distribution centers. He said it was difficult to understand the logic that was used to choose the locations. He asked the Board to urge the City Commission to urge the School Board to please open a food distribution center in Margate. Chair Ruzzano suggested the possibility of the School Board giving out a food voucher for use in their local area.

Mr. Schwartz: She said she had also been in touch with the School Board and State representatives about it. She said if it were based on income, Margate families should have a school, someplace familiar to go to. She suggested giving food to the bus drivers to drop off at local neighborhood bus stops so that children did not have to worry about getting to the school. She pointed out the locations of the Coral Springs schools and noted that there was nothing on the south side of Margate to help those children.

She reminded everyone of the drive-thrus and take-out restaurant locations to help support the local businesses, and to stay home and stay safe.

Mr. Caggiano: Expressed deep thanks to the first responders and asked them to be safe.

Ms. Simone: Asked that the residents, employees, and first responders to be safe and stay well. She said that comments she had made in the meeting were her personal opinion and were not personal attacks on anyone. She said Board members should be able to state differences of opinion and be treated respectfully.

Mr. Ruzzano: Stated that there was a Broward order that had just come out that advised everyone to stay home unless absolutely necessary. He commented on the seriousness of the virus and told everyone to be stay safe.

There being no additional business, the meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Transcribed by Rita Rodi, CRA Coordinator

Tommy Ruzzano, Chair